

DIE ZAUBEFLÖTE : A EUROPEAN SINGSPIEL

Zachary Bryant

Die Zauberflöte: A European Singspiel
by
Zachary Bryant

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements of the CSU Honors Program

for Honors in the Bachelor of Arts
in Music
College of the Arts
Columbus State University

Thesis Advisor Earl Coleman Date May 1, 2012

Committee Member Rian Lawler-Johnson Date 5-1-12

Director, Honors Program Cathy S. H. [Signature] Date 5/3/12

Through modern-day globalization, the cultures of the world are shared on a daily basis and are integrated into the lives of nearly every person. This reality seems to go unnoticed by most, but the fact remains that many individuals and their societies have formed a cultural identity from the combination of many foreign influences. Such a multicultural identity can be seen particularly in music. Composers, artists, and performers alike frequently seek to incorporate separate elements of style in their own identity. One of the earliest examples of this tradition is the German *Singspiel*. Through the synthesis of foreign and native styles, an amalgam of European opera and culture was realized in the *Singspiel*.

The distinctive qualities that make this form of staged drama so unique can be understood within the context of European opera in the early eighteenth century. "Opera," according to the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, is an Italian term literally meaning "work" (402). This term implies the use of multiple artistic forms in one composition, including solo singing, a chorus, orchestra, dance, and drama. Opera was first created during the Renaissance in attempts to revive the classical Greek drama, an ancient dramatic work which tells a story through song. After the conception of opera during the late sixteenth century in Italy, marked by the earliest opera *Dafne* by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), this new art form gained popularity throughout Europe (Grout 131). Composers of many European countries, including England's Henry Purcell (1659-1695), France's Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), and Germany's Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), would try to establish specific opera styles based on their national heritage. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Italian opera dominated most of European music. In particular, the Italian *opera seria*, or serious

opera, attracted both foreign audiences and composers, including one of the leading Baroque German composers Georg Friederic Händel (1685-1759). This style of opera is inspired by the, "Metastasian ideal," noble and mythological stories characterized by the use of ornamentation, recitative, virtuosic singing, and castrati (Hughes 329). The popularity of the Italian *opera seria* eventually influenced the path of opera throughout Europe.

In reaction to the permeation of Italian *opera seria* within the rest of European culture, alternative art forms were created in the early eighteenth century in opposition to "serious" opera. These included the English Ballad opera and the French *opéra-comique*, or comic opera. These new opera styles originated out of direct opposition to the dominant Italian style, often satirizing the most popular works of the large theaters. There are three main elements of the Ballad opera and *opéra-comique* that separate these styles from *opera seria*. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Ballad opera and *opéra-comique* is the use of popular tunes. Composers of these operas would often set new words to popular songs or compose songs in the style of popular music. This was the first method to oppose the unnatural virtuosity and grandiosity of *opera seria*. The second means of opposition was the use of spoken dialogue. In response to the prevalence of *opera seria*'s sung recitative, meaning dialogue set to music with speech-like rhythm and inflection, opera composers began to use spoken dialogue as a replacement for recitative. The last important feature of the Ballad opera and *opéra-comique* styles is the choice of subject addressed by these dramas. In contrast to the heroic and noble characters of *opera seria*, the new operas used characters from the common class. The stories portrayed of such were often comic,

suggestive, and modeled the complete rejection of Baroque nobility and high morality. These operas served as political, social, and religious commentary, satirizing particular public figures and current events. The first and most famous Ballad opera is John Gay's (1685-1732) *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). The story includes a lover's triangle and exhibits themes of thievery, sexual promiscuity, political corruption, and murder. *The Beggar's Opera* uses spoken dialogue and text set to the music of popular songs, opera arias, hymns and folk songs. French *opéra-comique* is best exemplified by the composer Charles Simon Favart (1710-1792). Favart's use of *vaudeville*, setting new text to pre-existing music, would later serve as an inspiration for works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) (Hughes 329).

Opposition to *opera seria* was not confined to foreign cultures outside of Italy. Within the Italian musical society, a form of comic opera called *opera buffa* began to parallel the popularity of *opera seria* during the eighteenth century. It began as a one-act interlude performed in between acts of *opera seria*. This miniature opera, called an *intermezzo*, incorporated many characteristics similar to the English and French comic operatic styles, including scenes and characters from the common class, comic plots, and simple music. An important difference, however, between the English and French styles and the *intermezzo* was the preservation of the recitative, meaning dialogue set to music. The ascent of the *intermezzo* as an independent genre is marked by the extreme popularity of the opera *La serva padrona* (*The Servant Turned Mistress*) (1733) by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736). As the demand for comic Italian opera became apparent, the *intermezzo* expanded to the large, full-scaled staged works known as *opera buffa*. *Opera buffa* usually consisted of two acts and focused on the

common people by replacing the mythological plots and characters of *opera seria* with present-day scenes, rejecting the high virtues of the Baroque era in favor of mundane comedy, and substituting the virtuosic singing of the soprano and castrati for the witty, “patter” arias of the *basso buffo* (Hughes 345). The innovations of *opera buffa* would become cornerstones for most of Mozart’s staged compositions.

It is from this history of opera and its transformations that the *Singspiel* is constructed into a unique German art form. The innovations of the English Ballad opera, French *opéra-comique*, and Italian *opera buffa*, including popular tunes, spoken dialogue, and common class subjects, were significant in the development of German opera. The union of these styles and native influences created the *Singspiel*.

The *Singspiel* style shows a great amount of influence from origins both native and foreign to Germany. According to Donald Jay Grout in *A Short History of Opera*, the most likely forerunner of *Singspiel* within Germany was the school drama (133). The school drama was a “play in Latin or German, moral or religious, didactic in purpose, and performed by students” (133). These plays were composed of spoken dialogue and music, including instrumental dances, solo odes, and chorus. This popular educational tool came to influence the work of Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, in particular his opera *Seelewig (Play of Rejoicing)* (1644). This work is considered a spiritual *pastorale*, an opera in which the story is an allegory displaying the virtues of Christianity in a pastoral setting. Many later composers of early German opera, such as J. W. Franck, J. P. Forstch, and J. S. Kusser, would learn from these art forms by composing innovative and didactic stage works in order to keep the support of the morally strict Lutheran

church. The alternation of spoken dialogue and sung text, the didacticism of the stories, and the pastoral settings of the school dramas and *Seelewig* foreshadow the *Singspiel*.

The middle-class societal emphasis of *Singspiel* can be attributed in part to the native influence of the Meistersinger. The Meistersingers were tradesmen of the German towns during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries whose duty was to compose poetry and unaccompanied melodies. These musicians were responsible for the preservation of traditional German folk tunes as well as the creation of new popular tunes. The Meistersingers were members of a guild devoted to poetry and music who strictly adhered to the rules of composition as noted in the *Tabulatur*. This book explained the principles of every Meistersinger composition, including artistic subject, poetic form, and most importantly, rhyme. These musicians often composed poetry and music to extol scenes of the common life. For example, one melody written by a Meistersinger is entitled *Vielfrassweis*, meaning "song on over-eating" (Somerset-Ward 52). This art was not considered sophisticated or noble, rather it sustained the tradition of German music for the middle and lower classes throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Another common practice of the Meistersinger guild was to compose new text for pre-existing melodies. This popular composition style greatly influenced the musical development of *Singspiel*. The Meistersingers provided a model on which later *Singspiel* composers could base the idea of opera for the common man.

The last native influence of *Singspiel* was *Lieder*. *Lieder* is the German term for songs and it describes the compositions of song composers since the twelfth century. The characteristics of eighteenth century *Lieder* include folk-like melodies, strophic musical form, syllabic text setting, and simple accompaniment. The first important *Lied*

collection according to Donald Jay Grout in *A History of Western Music* was *Die singende Muse an der Pleisse* (*The Singing Muse on the Pleisse*) published in 1736 (578). This collection incorporates songs mostly using parodied texts, or texts written to fit old music. The old music used for these new songs were mainly clavier pieces. *Die singende Muse an der Pleisse* represented such notable composers as J. J. Quantz, K. H. Graun, and C. P. E. Bach. The strophic forms, folk-like melodies, and simple accompaniments of *Lieder* in eighteenth century Germany provided the basis for songs used in later *Singspiel*.

The innovations of the Ballad opera, *òpera-comique*, and *opera buffa* were introduced to German culture by traveling acting troupes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These troupes were comprised of English comedians who performed Ballad operas in German and one of the most famous of these dramatists was Jakob Ayler (1543-1605) (Grove 402). Due to the lack of vocal training within these troupes, songs were required to be more simple. The virtuosity of Baroque opera singers was not only rejected because of ideology but also because of necessity. The prevalent use of folk melodies made Ballad operas more accessible to untrained actors and allowed the acting troupes to transport the new style to other countries. The use of spoken dialogue also attracted traveling acting groups. The absence of recitative required less vocal demands and allowed the drama to unfold uninhibited. Actors then had a style of opera that offered a greater emphasis on theatre. It is by the efforts of these traveling troupes that German composers found inspiration from the innovations of foreign opera (Grove 402).

The modern understanding of *Singspiel* is the result of centuries of transformation and clarification. The term itself has appeared in many variations including the *singets Spil*, meaning “sung play,” of Jakob Ayrers, the Hamburg genre *Sing- Spiele*, and the works labelled as *komische Oper*, meaning “comic opera,” by Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804) and Christian Felix Weiße (1726-1804). Despite differences in semantics, the present classification of *Singspiel* as found in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* is translated literally as “sung play” and is understood to refer to light German opera of the eighteenth century (Grove 402). *Singspiel* employs spoken dialogue and is based on comic or sentimental subjects. The characters found in this genre are usually of a lower class, consisting of peasants and other townspeople. The *Singspiel*’s development from spoken theater greatly influenced the importance of text and drama in these works. As Georg Philipp Harsdörffer points out, evidence of this importance can even be found in the term itself. Harsdörffer explains that much light can be shed on the term *Singspiel* by first understanding the nature of German nouns. In situations of compound nouns, the definitive emphasis is usually placed on the final portion of the word. Thus the term *Singspiel* can be literally translated as “songs within play” with emphasis being placed on *spiel* meaning “play.” For a genre that places more emphasis on the music rather than on the text and drama, Harsdörffer says a term like *Spielgesang*, literally translated as “play within songs,” may have been more favored (Grove 402). It is for this reason that performers of *Singspiel* are commonly described as actors that can sing rather than singers that can act. These general characteristics, however, were not consistent during the creation of *Singspiel* and German opera. An

atmosphere of political, religious, and cultural division in eighteenth century Germany inhibited the cultivation of a single, unified style of German opera.

During the eighteenth century, Germany was separated by political, religious, and cultural power. As a result of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the empire was divided into independent principalities. In fact, by the end of the seventeenth century, Germany was composed of no less than one thousand and seven independent states ruled separately by princes and nobles (Grout 130). Such division naturally restricted cooperation between the states in many aspects, including musical. The absence of political unity discouraged the development of a unified German style of music.

The struggle between religious powers within Germany influenced the evolution of *Singspiel*. The result of religious upheaval created by the Protestant Reformation shaped an important regional distinction between North and South Germany. After the publication of Martin Luther's *95 Theses* in 1517, the power of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope was challenged. Those challenging the dominant Catholic religion found refuge in the Northern states of Germany where Luther was most influential. This dramatic division of the church led the northern states to become predominantly Lutheran while the southern states stayed predominantly Roman Catholic. The distinction between Lutheranism and Catholicism shaped *Singspiel's* composition in the northern and southern regions. In sacred music, the Lutheran church questioned the use of polyphony, meaning the use of multiple voices, finding chorales and hymnody more appealing in order to interact with the congregation. Some leaders, such as John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, even banned polyphony altogether, preferring psalms to be sung in unison. These and other more conservative ideologies changed the nature of

Singspiel in the northern region. The *Singspiel* of northern Germany, as exemplified by Hiller and Weiße, expressed the reservation and simplicity found in the teachings of the Lutheran church. The idyllic and sentimental comedy along with the frequent use of folk song were agreeable with Lutheran ideology. The northern *Singspiel* was dramatically juxtaposed by a southern *Singspiel* influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. The grandiosity of the Catholic Church along with its complex polyphonic musical composition greatly influenced *Singspiel* in the southern region. These stage works were more lively and placed great importance on display. Reservation was seemingly absent in the southern *Singspiel*. As best featured in the works of Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf (1739-1799), the *Singspiel* of this region was characterized by its vivacious rhythms, bravura passages, meaning musical phrases requiring exceptional agility, chromatic touches, energy, and humor. The religious sentiments of each region produced two unique and contrasting styles of *Singspiel* (Hughes 165-169).

The cultural atmospheres in northern and southern Germany helped the distinction between two styles of *Singspiel*. The northern region of Germany was greatly influenced by French culture. This influence led to the incorporation of the French *opéra-comique* into the northern *Singspiel*. The French ideas of romantic fancy, glorification of the peasantry, and pre-revolutionary sentiment are apparent in the *Singspiel* of the prominent northern composers Hiller and Weiße. Many stories of the northern *Singspiel* are direct adaptations of stories found in earlier *opéra-comique*. In contrast, the southern region of Germany was greatly influenced by Italian styles. Characteristics of Italian *opera buffa* are particularly evident in southern *Singspiel*. Grand stage displays, lively orchestral interaction, and even some use of recitative were

characteristics borrowed from *opera buffa* are included in southern *Singspiel*. Although the ideas expressed in these *Singspiel* attracted greater attention from the common people, the southern German *Singspiel* continued the Italian tradition of using royal and noble characters while integrating the lower-class peasant characters into these stories.

The political, religious, and cultural differences within Germany during the eighteenth century are reflected in the progression of *Singspiel*. The distinction between northern and southern German *Singspiel* influenced the direction of a unique and unified style of German Opera.

The history of the *Singspiel* genre illuminates the monumental importance of Mozart in the world of German opera. The fact is that Mozart did not create any new style of opera; rather he built upon it, and according to many, perfected the compositional frameworks of his predecessors. The innovations of the early composers Johann Adam Hiller, Georg Benda, and Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf provided the foundations for the creation of the Mozart masterpieces.

The earliest appearance of German *Singspiel* is found in northern Germany by the composers Johann Adam Hiller (1728-1804) and Georg Benda (1722-1795). These early forms of *Singspiel* were first imitations of opera performed by traveling English actors. The English ballad opera style gained popularity in Germany and many composers tried to produce German equivalents. With the assistance of librettist Christian Felix Weiße, the first modern *Singspiel* with music composed by Johann Adam Hiller was *Der Teufel ist los oder Die verwandelten Weiber* (*The Devil to Pay or The Metamorphosed Wives*) (1766). An adaptation of the English ballad opera "The Devil to Pay," *Der Teufel ist los* began a succession of popular *Singspiel*, earning the duo the

title of "the fathers of *Singspiel*" (Grout 306). The sentimental comedies of the Hiller and Weiße collaborations culminated in their most famous *Singspiel* entitled *Der Jagd* (*The Hunt*). This production, which premiered in 1770, used a libretto by Weiße that was based on the French *opéra-comique* of Michel-Jean Sedaine *La partie de chasse de Henri IV* (*The Hunting Party of Henry IV*). This most celebrated work of Hiller and Weiße contains many of the characteristics of *Singspiel* including scenes from the common life, simple virtues, glorification of the peasantry, and the pre-revolutionary vilification of royalty. The composition of this *Singspiel* includes both German folk-songs and folk styles, Italian arias, and prominent spoken dialogue. The synthesis of such elements native and foreign by Hiller and Weiße set the stage for the later development of German opera. In addition to the productions of Hiller and Weiße, northern Germany provided another influential composer by the name of Georg Benda. The works of Benda included many operas and *Singspiels*, but his most influential genre was the melodrama. The melodrama of the eighteenth century included orchestra, folk songs, and spoken dialogue in the style of *Singspiel*; however, the combination of these elements by Benda created a spectacle unseen in German opera. Never before had spoken dialogue and music coincided on stage, but Benda composed dramatic scenes within his melodramas that used a precise alternation between dialogue and orchestral music. Two most famous melodramas by Benda exemplifying the use of dialogue and orchestra were *Ariadne auf Naxos* (*Ariadne on Naxos*) and *Medea*. The influence of the melodramatic style can be seen in the operas of Mozart and later Romantic opera, including the grave-digging scene in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and the incantation scene in Weber's *Der Freischütz* (*The Marksman*) (Grout 308).

The style of early *Singspiel* found in southern Germany is most evident in the works of the Viennese composer Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf. Vienna in the middle of the eighteenth century was a wealthy city deeply influenced by Italian culture. A glance at the compositional output of Dittersdorf quickly finds a mixture of Italian genres, such as *opera buffa* and concerti, and German genres, such as organ music and *Singspiel*. This blend of cultures as typified in Vienna seems to permeate the music of Dittersdorf, including his German *Singspiel*. The *Singspiel* of Dittersdorf combines some of the popular characteristics of Italian opera with the innovations of German opera. Such a creation is characterized by German text, spoken dialogue, and common-life characters paired with vivacious music, increased use of the orchestra, and royal characters. These elements are displayed in many of his *Singspiel*, including his most famous *Doktor und Apotheker* (*Doctor and Apothecary*) of 1786. Dittersdorf's style of *Singspiel*, specified as 'Viennese *Singspiel*,' is the direct predecessor of the Mozartean *Singspiel* and would eventually lead to the Viennese *Operetta*. Through the integration of native and foreign operatic characteristics, the early *Singspiel* composer Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf influenced a new and uniquely German style of opera (Grout 310-311).

The desire to define opera in Germany as a distinct genre in relation to its Italian, French, and English counterparts was continued by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The seven German operas within the Mozart repertoire do not compare in number to the fourteen operas composed in the Italian styles. However, the innovations displayed in the German operas are equally fascinating.

The elements of Mozart's early style of German *Singspiel* are found in one of his earliest German stage works, *Bastien und Bastienne*. Composed during 1768 at the age

of twelve, the inception of *Bastien und Bastienne* follows the historical traditions of *Singspiel* as established by early composers. The libretto is based on a French play, *Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne* (*The Loves of Bastien and Bastienne*), by Justine Favart. Mozart's adaptation was meant to parody the French *intermezzo*, *Le devin du village* (*The Soothsayer of the Village*) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau based on the same play by Favart. The origins of *Bastien und Bastienne* are traditional and mirror northern Germany's reliance on French works for the subjects of *Singspiel*. Further similarities between *Bastien und Bastienne* and northern German *Singspiel* are easily found in the plot of the opera. The story is set in a pastoral village and revolves around three characters: two lovers and a soothsayer, or a fortune teller. The shepherdess, Bastienne, suspects her lover, Bastien, of being unfaithful. In desperation, Bastienne requests the magical help of the village soothsayer, Colas, to win the affections of her lover. The soothsayer agrees and advises her to act cold and distant toward Bastien. Bastien enters and is told by Colas that Bastienne has found a new lover. This news causes Bastien to ask for help. Colas recites a spell which he says will make her fall in love. When the spell appears not to work, Bastien threatens to commit suicide and the lovers finally reconcile. This earliest work of Mozart displays a strong influence of northern German opera. The pastoral setting, the sentimental comedy, and the virtues of love and peasantry combine within the framework utilized by Johann Adam Hiller. Also notable is the absence of opulence and grandiosity which is characteristic of southern German *Singspiel*. The music of *Bastien und Bastienne* is equally typical of *Singspiel*. Besides the ending trio of the opera, the vocal writing includes only simple songs and duets. These songs are by no means virtuosic or complex, rather they

display the folk-like tunefulness of the characters' village home. This dramatic instinct and use of orchestra in *Bastien und Bastienne*, also provides early evidence of Mozart's stage sense. Although this *Singspiel* is only an imitation of its earlier counterparts, the sensitive perception of the essential traits of *Singspiel* offers insight into the nature of Mozart's evolution of the genre. The intimate understanding of the German *Singspiel* revealed in this early work provided hope for an unequivocally German style of opera (Einstein 450-453).

The mature style of *Singspiel* created by Mozart first occurred in his German operatic works, *Thamos, König in Ägypten* (*Thamos, King of Egypt*) and *Zaïde*. Both were composed in 1779 and display many developments of style important to the evolution of German opera. *Thamos* and *Zaïde* illustrate the importance of character delineation in Mozart opera. Within these *Singspiel* are both serious and comedic characters. This mixture of character types allows the avoidance of one particular genre classification and emphasizes the use of realistic characters. These realistic roles are intended to replace the caricatured roles of traditional opera and show the spontaneous human element so vital to Mozart. Greater importance is also given to the ensembles of these operas. Through these music ensembles, the dramatic action is sustained and the characters are defined as individuals with human spontaneity. It is through the interaction of the ensemble that Mozart most clearly juxtaposes each character involved. Also important is their use of melodrama. As described previously, this invention of Georg Benda combines the dramatic music of the orchestra with precise spoken dialogue. Although melodrama does not appear in any of Mozart's later *Singspiel*, its use in *Thamos* and *Zaïde* continued the German tradition that would

eventually influence Beethoven and Weber. These *Singspiel* show development in German opera style by combining social ranks. Many previous *Singspiel* had focused solely on the lower peasant class, but these works combine peasantry and royalty in one story. This practice, first used for grandiose and display in the southern *Singspiel*, would eventually be employed by Mozart for the purpose of social commentary. The operas *Thamos, König in Ägypten* and *Zaïde* mark many changes in the style of Mozart's *Singspiel* (Einstein 455-458).

The developments in the *Singspiel* genre culminated in the last two German *Singspiel* of Mozart, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) and *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). These operas seem to be directly connected to their early predecessors, *Thamos* and *Zaïde*. The stories of each opera are quite similar; *Zaïde* and *Die Entführung* are both based on the "seraglio" plot of Favart while *Thamos* and *Die Zauberflöte* exhibit fascination with Egypt influences and symbolism. The vocal classification and character delineation of the "seraglio" operas are also very similar. *Zaïde* and *Die Entführung* both revolve around two lovers, a tenor and soprano, who are captured by Turkish royalty and are tormented by a sinister servant, a bass. The later operas, however, offer complete portrayals of Mozart's mature style of opera composition. *Die Entführung* and *Die Zauberflöte* use spoken dialogue and folk-like songs, but they also include some arias and ensembles in the virtuosic Italian style. This blend and imitation of styles proves essential in the creation of some German operatic styles. The characterization in the later operas also exhibits greater depth and psychological exploration. In particular, the character of Osmin in *Die Entführung* is considered by Alfred Einstein in *Mozart: His Character, His Work* to be

Mozart's "greatest creation" (458). Mozart avoids the typical caricature of the evil servant and makes the character of Osmin realistic and spontaneous. Through the use of sudden strokes of color and chromaticism, Mozart successfully displays in Osmin "paroxysms of rage and sadism" (Einstein 459). Osmin is no longer a monotonous character with a singular purpose, but rather a real person whose emotional and psychological state is subject to those around him. These developments are significant to both *Singspiel* and the world of opera and are no less apparent in Mozart's final work, *Die Zauberflöte*.

Die Zauberflöte (*The Magic Flute*) is a *Singspiel* with music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to a libretto written by Emanuel Schikaneder (1751- 1812). *Die Zauberflöte* is an allegorical fairy-tale based on a combination of German folklore. The story of the opera centers around two characters, Tamino the prince and Papageno the bird-catcher, and their search for love. Tamino is convinced by the Queen of the Night to rescue her daughter, Pamina, from her "wicked" enemy Sarastro (Donington 68). The Queen's three attendants give them each an instrument to aid them on their journey, Tamino a magic flute and Papageno a chime of bells, as well as three child-spirits for guidance. At Sarastro's palace, Tamino and Papageno are sentenced to a series of tests by Sarastro, only after which they can receive their lovers. Tamino perseveres through these trials while Papageno fails on multiple occasions. In the end, both are united with their loves and the wisdom of Sarastro triumphs over the schemes of the Queen of the Night.

Revered by Donald Jay Grout in *A History of Western Music* as, "the first modern German opera," *Die Zauberflöte* represents the pinnacle of the German *Singspiel* (620).

Die Zauberflöte seems to display that European fusion of styles so paramount to *Singspiel* with an unprecedented degree of unity. By incorporating the most critical elements of the English, French, Italian, and early German opera forms with contemporary German sentiment, Mozart created what he called a, “*grosse Oper*,” and what Grout interprets as “real German opera” (620). This most representative of German operas accomplished the feat of combining the characteristics of the competing opera forms into one cohesive work. From the Ballad opera and French *opéra-comique* came the elements of spoken dialogue and simple folk tunes. The theme of the common man was offered to *Die Zauberflöte* from the English, French, and Italian comic opera forms. Likewise, a great amount of influence is evident from the popular Italian *opera seria*. From this style came the virtuosic arias and sung recitatives found in *Die Zauberflöte* as well as the royal and noble themes woven into the story. Within *Die Zauberflöte*, Mozart united the styles of opera by combining spoken dialogue and sung recitative, joining strophic folk songs and grand arias, and blending the lives of the prince and the pauper.

This mixture served the intentions of Mozart well by allowing greater freedom for character delineation. The material transferred from the comic opera styles of England and France helped depict those characters of lower class like Papageno and Papagena. These characters are given songs with German folk-like tunes, dialogue that is always spoken, and thus represent the simple virtues of love for the common man. In contrast, the material mostly found in *opera seria* is reserved for characters of higher social standing. For example in Figure 1, in reaction to the giant serpent at the opening of Act

I, Prince Tamino cries for help through sung recitative rather than yelling with spoken dialogue.

Figure 1 "Introduktion"- *Die Zauberflöte*



This immediately signals his rank as an upper class individual. This same technique is used for those of higher rank, including Tamino, Pamina, Sarastro, and the Queen of the Night, by giving them sung recitative and virtuosic arias in the Italian manner. Similarly, the practice of setting text to preexisting melodies as preserved in *Die Zauberflöte* creates a sense of "secular awe" (Hughes 347). For example, in scene ten of Act II, the two armed guards of the temple lead Tamino to his trials while singing a creed to the goddess Isis based on the Luthern hymn tune *Ach Gott, von Himmel sich darein* (*Oh God, Look Down from Heaven*). By this incorporation of all opera and musical genres, Mozart's aptitude for character delineation as seen specifically in his late operas is further enhanced.

The expression of German sentiment in *Die Zauberflöte* finds many of its origins in Freemasonry (Einstein 81). Mozart had joined the *Zur Wohltätigkeit* (*Beneficence*) lodge in 1784 and became the composer of music for many of the Masonic ceremonies (Einstein 81). Through this organization, Mozart befriended many other notable artists of the period, including Johann Christian Bach, Franz Joseph Haydn, and Emanuel Schikaneder (85). The tenants of Freemasonry and the burgeoning Enlightenment movement seem to abound in *Die Zauberflöte* and permeate to the depths of the story

and characters. The ideas of moral purification, human enlightenment, and initiation are taught within this allegorical tale. Indeed Richard Somerset-Ward seems to describe it best as an exotic allegory presenting a, “profoundly serious theme in a wrapping of pantomime, musical comedy, and dramatic imagery” (64).

Die Zauberflöte communicates the ideals of humanity valued highest by the Freemasons through intricate and subtle symbolism. From the first measures of the overture, the symbols of Masonry begin to shape every aspect of the opera. The symbol of three in particular frequently reoccurs throughout *Die Zauberflöte*. As seen in Figure 2, the opening three measures of the opera consist of three emphatic entrances of triads in the key of E-flat major.

Figure 2 “Overture”- *Die Zauberflöte*



In the first seconds of the opera, Mozart has already symbolized the number three in four different ways, including number of measures, number of entrances, number of pitches in each chord, and key signature. E-flat major serves an important role in the symbolism of *Die Zauberflöte* because it uses three flats in its key signature, thus signaling dramatic moments of enlightenment and revelation. The number three reappears in *Die Zauberflöte* in many more ways, for example, the three ladies, the three spirits, the three couples of each rank, the three Temples, and the three chord

motif used in the Temple scenes. The traditionally Masonic, "masculine symbolism of the number three," immediately foreshadows the theme of initiation (Donington 62).

The journey that Tamino and Papageno embark upon represents the Masonic ritual of initiation. Initiation symbolizes the idea of the rite of passage that all people must experience in order to become enlightened. The Masonic view of enlightenment requires the, "movement away from the instinct-world of the mothers towards the spirit-world of the fathers" (Donington 67). This perspective considers everyone to have naturally started life under the control of the mother with personal realization being gained only from greater independence, represented by the father. These two figures symbolize the animal instincts of nature versus the wisdom of human reason. In the end, true enlightenment is found with a balance of these forces of masculinity and femininity. Upon Tamino's entrance, it can be interpreted that he is already along his journey of independence since he has, "a bow without an arrow" (62). This suggests that, though Tamino has great potential for masculinity, he does not possess it as of yet. Papageno, on the other hand, represents the common man who has not attempted to find personal enlightenment. After all, as the Queen's bird-catcher, his livelihood requires full loyalty to the mother symbol, the Queen of the Night. Sarastro represents the father and is symbolized throughout the opera by the sun, the source of light that drives away the night. Tamino's movement away from the mother instinct is aided by the magic flute. The flute, described as golden in the first scene of Act I, is the color of the sun and allows Tamino to overcome nature by taming the creatures of the forest in one scene and taming fire and water during his final trial. The silver bells given to Papageno, on the other hand, are likened to the glow of the moon, the symbol of the Queen. These

bells cause a loss of human consciousness and independence, as evidenced when Monostatos and his slaves become mesmerized by the sound of the bells and dance offstage. The prevalence of Masonic symbolism throughout the drama of *Die Zauberflöte* is further enhanced by the musical symbolism of Mozart.

A profound understanding of Masonic symbolism is exhibited in the music composed for *Die Zauberflöte*. In particular, the musical composition of Papageno displays great attention to symbolic detail. In his entrance aria, "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja," (The Birdcatcher, Yes I Am) Papageno appears to be of a lower class due to the simple, folk-like music of the orchestra. After the first verse of the aria, the social class of Papageno is confirmed. The text of the song explains Papageno's lowly position as well as the relatively simple vocal melody, reminiscent of the folk songs accessible by untrained singers. The key of the aria also hints towards Papageno's mundane ways. The entire aria is set in G major which consists of only one sharp. At this point Papageno has a long way to go before attaining the honorable three flats of E-flat major. Also significant is the frequent playing of his panpipes in this aria, which is at once jocular and profoundly symbolic. As shown in Figure 3, the panpipe motive consists of five ascending pitches and appears repeatedly unchanged.

Figure 3 "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja"- *Die Zauberflöte*



Numeric symbolism in Freemasonry values the number three and most of its multiples. Since the motive of the panpipe is only composed of five notes, it is implied that

Papageno has fallen short of human enlightenment. His life is unfulfilled, and since the panpipes are used to catch birds for the Queen of the Night, Papageno has not ventured away from the instinctive mother. The symbol of the panpipes will continue to musically depict Papageno's journey toward enlightenment.

The next musical moment for Papageno occurs in a room of Sarastro's palace with Pamina. Having told her that Tamino is attempting to rescue her, Pamina is overjoyed at the thought of having Tamino as her husband. Papageno becomes dejected because it seems that he will never find love. Pamina and Papageno then sing the duet, "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen," (With Men Who Feel Love) in which Pamina gives hope to Papageno. Instantly noticeable is the elegant *andantino* tempo and minuet dance rhythm, indicative of the grace of Princess Pamina. Pamina and Papageno share the same basic melodies throughout the duet, but crucial changes are made that distinguish the social class of each singer. For example, Figure 4 shows the same melody phrase written for each character.

Figure 4 "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen"- Die Zauberflöte

Pamina

Papageno



Pamina negotiates the higher register with ease and control while Papageno must pause after the E-flat before continuing, indicating a clear difference in vocal ability. The same phrase occurs later in variation, as seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5 “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen”- Die Zauberflöte

Pamina



Papageno



Again, Pamina displays agility while Papageno attempts to imitate, reverting back to the original melody after that troublesome E-flat. The coda of the duet fosters the most separation between the two characters thus far. At the end of the last two phrases, Pamina expresses her hope for love with two cadenzas. Papageno listens in awe as Pamina displays such elegant virtuosity. All of this takes place within the key of E-flat major, the key of enlightenment. This seems to confirm the wisdom in Pamina's words of hope for Papageno. Interestingly, the duet only begins to stray from this virtuous key at the ends of each of Papageno's verses. Such musical symbolism marks momentous occasions as Papageno's story continues.

A change in Papageno is apparent in the aria “Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen” (A Maiden or a Wife). First, the key signature of the aria is F major. This means that he has gained one flat, bringing him closer to the three flats needed to represent full enlightenment. This progress, however, appears to be threatened by his silver bells. As Papageno accompanies himself with the Queen's gift during each refrain, he becomes progressively less mentally self-controlled. This causes Papageno to burst out into

verses declaring his love of food and wine and eventually resolving to kill himself if a girl won't kiss him. The B-flat that symbolized Papageno's progress even temporarily disappears during each verse. The silver bells represent animal instinct and distract Papageno from the noble task of finding a partner. Papageno recovers from the spell of the bells after the aria and proves his progress by agreeing to love an elderly woman despite her grotesque appearance. At that moment, the old woman transforms into the beautiful Papagena, only to be scared away immediately by thunder and lightning. This aria displays the growth of Papageno through the subtleties of symbolism.

Next, Papageno searches for his lost Papagena during "Papagena! Weibchen! Täubchen!" (Papagena! Little Wife! Little Dove!). The panpipe motive reappears, this time with a purpose. The five-note call of the panpipes is Papageno's method to find Papagena, but it still is incomplete. The difference between this motive and the motive from the first aria is the reason for his lack of fulfillment. At the beginning of the opera, Papageno was blissfully ignorant of the constraints placed upon him by the Queen of the Night. Now, Papageno realizes he is incomplete and that finding his partner Papagena is the solution. In this case, he is venturing away from the mother symbol. The ending *andante* section of the aria contains great significance. First, the slower *andante* tempo is reminiscent of the virtuous grace of enlightenment in the earlier duet. As he threatens to commit suicide if he cannot find Papagena, the key changes to G minor, which naturally has two flats. Added to this new key is an A-flat, effectively giving Papageno the three flats that would make E-flat major and, thus, signaling Papageno's ascent to enlightenment. Papageno has realized that nothing is more valuable than love and that he would choose death over the vanities of the world.

The enlightened Papageno is rescued from death by the three spirit guides and reunited with his love, Papagena. The lovers then express their excitement in the duet, "Papageno/Papagena." In this duet there are neither panpipes nor bells because those instruments represent the old Papageno and his dependence on the Queen. Instead, the orchestra uses a new motive similar to the panpipes, but symbolically different, composed of three descending sixteenth notes, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 "Papageno/Papagena"- *Die Zauberflöte*



shaped the development of German opera during the nineteenth century (Somerset-Ward 79). Through the fusion of folk songs and arias, spoken dialogue and sung recitative, and royalty and the common man, Mozart composed a *Singspiel* that, according to Richard Somerset-Ward in *The Story of Opera*, “affected the world of opera like the Revolution and the Enlightenment” (80). The ideological progress within Europe during the eighteenth century was completely incorporated into the new German operatic style, *Singspiel*. The wealth of cultures converged within *Die Zauberflöte* warrants not only the title of a German *Singspiel* but deserves the honorable merit of a truly European *Singspiel*.

Works Cited

- Donington, Robert. *Opera and its Symbols*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990. 62-75. Print.
- Einstein, Alfred. *Mozart: His Character, His Work*. London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1945. 77-100, 448-468. Print.
- Grout, Donald. *A History of Western Music*. 4th. New York, NY: Norton, 1988. 418, 577-578, 606, 617, 620, 741. Print.
- Grout, Donald. *A Short History of Opera*. 3rd. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988. 129-139, 304-311, 315-344. Print.
- Hughes, David. *A History of European Music*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1974. 165-169, 231-232, 268-276, 329, 345, 347, 378, 384. Print.
- Landon, H. C. Robbins. *The Mozart Compendium: A Guide to Mozart's Life & Music*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1990. 74-78, 91-93, 154-157, 239, 255. Print.
- Mitchell, Ronald. *Opera: Dead or Alive*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970. 209-221. Print.
- Pauly, Reinhard. *Music and the Theater: An Introduction to Opera*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970. 89-93, 99-101, 115-125. Print.
- Rosen, Charles. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1972. 317-325. Print.
- "Singspiel." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1992. 402. Print.

Somerset-Ward, Richard. *The Story of Opera*. New York, NY: Abrams, 1998. 52, 64-80.
Print.